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JAMES KILLPATRICK AND SMALLPOX INOCULATION IN CHARLESTOWN*

By JOSEPH IOOR WARING, M.D.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

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ON APRIL 13, 1738, the ship *London Frigate* ended her long voyage from Guinea and reached her market in Charlestown with a cargo of slaves for the Carolina planters.[1] Unfortunately for the colonists, the vessel brought among the blacks several cases of smallpox which eluded the required quarantine inspection performed under the threatening guns of Johnson's Fort, and became the sources of a violent epidemic. The disease "spread so extensively that there were not a sufficient number of persons in health to attend the sick, and many persons perished from neglect and want. . . . There was scarcely a house in which there had not been one or more deaths. Inoculation was at this time first attempted with some success, and the disease soon after abated."[2]

Smallpox had appeared in Charlestown on several previous occasions. The ancient practice of inoculation, possibly known to those very Guinea negroes whose illness started the local epidemic, had not been utilized in England until 1721, and within two months of its use there had been employed in Boston by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, at the instigation of Cotton Mather. The violent opposition which the practice received in New England may have been sufficient discouragement to the practitioners in Charlestown to prevent its trial. Until the epidemic of 1738 no mention of inoculation is found, except an article in the *South Carolina Gazette*[3] which gives only a brief description and was apparently more an item of news than a matter for practical use.

By June of 1738 so severely had Charlestown suffered from the onslaught of the disease that the Governor was led to proclaim a day of "Fasting and Humiliation." A promising report of the virtues of tar water as a preventive was crushed by the death of its author from smallpox. So numerous were the smallpox cases that the church wardens of the town were moved to open a special hospital for the care of the sick and dying. Meanwhile, inoculation had been suggested and begun by Mr. Mowbray, surgeon of a British man-of-war then in the harbor, and after some hesitation, the procedure was taken up by most of the local practitioners, not without much criticism from the minority.

The *South Carolina Gazette* was from the start an opponent of the inoculators. Articles decrying the practice on moral grounds, and letters denouncing and defending it appeared with regularity. The editor feared that inoculation would spread rather than check the infection. On June 1 he remarked that:

> We don't hear that the Smallpox spreads much in this Town, and there are very few that have it in the natural way, and all very favorably, but several being fond of having it, have been inoculated, and probably the distemper has been

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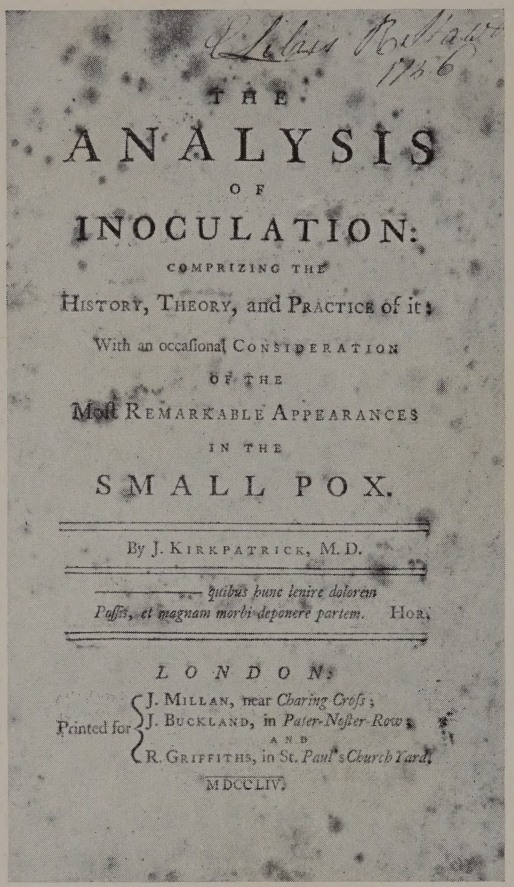
propagated more that way than it would have been trusting to Providence, and using prudent precautions in preparing



THE
ANALYSIS
OF
INOCULATION:
COMPRIZING THE
HISTORY, THEORY, and PRACTICE of it;
With an occasional CONSIDERATION
OF THE
Most REMARKABLE APPEARANCES
IN THE
SMALL POX.

By J. KIRKPATRICK, M.D.

——— *quibus hunc lenire dolorem*
Possis, et magnam morbi deponere partem. HOR.

LONDON:
Printed for J. MILLAN, near *Charing Cross*;
J. BUCKLAND, in *Pater-Noster-Row*;
AND
R. GRIFFITHS, in St. *Paul's Church Yard*.
MDCCLIV.

FIG. 1.

the body in case of an attack. What success the inoculators will have in those parts of the world we shall learn by those that have been willing to expose themselves to the tryal.[4]

Shortly thereafter he admitted that the "Distemper is becoming more epidemical," blamed the spread on inoculation, and still preferred to be resigned to his fate.

Despite this editorial opposition the practice continued and was quite successful in the opinion of those who used it.

Besides Mowbray, the most enthusiastic of the inoculators was James Killpatrick, who dwelt for some time in Charlestown, and later returned to England to revive and popularize the methods which he had used in Carolina. He tells the story of the epidemic as follows:

Perhaps it might not be very material to premise, that the Smallpox was imported into South-Carolina early in the year 1738; or that they endeavour with great Caution to prevent the Invasion of that, and other mortally contagious diseases, by appointing some physician to visit all ships from Africa at least; and by requiring an oath from all masters of such ships, that they are, and have been free from such distempers on the voyage. Yet whereever the error or fraud might be on this unhappy occasion, it was then introduced by a ship with slaves from some part of Africa. The ship, I think, arrived some time in February or March; neither did the distemper appear to spread with any extreme rapidity, or unusual vehemence during those months, or even in April, and the beginning of May; while the weather continued but moderately hot; especially if we consider the numerous objects of it, who must have sprung up in the many years, wherein the province, with one inconsiderable exception, was free from it. For 14 or 15 years ago, it had been imported, but by the great public care to prevent its diffusion, there were but one, or two persons at most, who then died of it; and I believe it had scarcely seized ten, when it was entirely extinguished for that time. This occurrence excepted, I am persuaded it had not been there in much less than 30 years before, I am positive not in twenty and upwards. While no extraordinary mortality ensued in the months already mentioned, people who inclined to inoculation were censured by some, as forward to extend the infection, and no little warmth succeeded their altercations on the subject. And I remember particularly, a gentleman of the profession, who was

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no early admirer of it, told me, he thought it would be no ways necessary in a climate, where we were so relaxed by the heat, that a mild disease must be the inevitable consequence. Without pretending to contest it much, I only replied, we were not yet fairly entered upon our heats (which are seldom violent there before June, tho' it's sensibly hotter, in general, than in England in the same months) but that possibly the great fervour of the blood, in these heats, might prevent our being remarkably the better for relaxation.

But to digress no longer from the design of this appendix, tho' I have never understood that any person kept a precise account of the number of the inoculated, yet I have heard many computations, and never knew any estimate of less than a thousand inoculated persons of different colors, ages, etc. There were indeed very great numbers for the quantity of people there, and the few months in which it was celebrated. For being once begun, the advantages were so undeniable, that a great majority applied it in their families, ignorance, prejudice, and obstinancy itself being in a manner totally borne down and defeated by its irrefutable success. I shall, however, rather to come short than exceed, admit but 800 inoculated, which, as I have said, is considerably short of the lowest estimate I have heard of: but it is certain, that of these, only six whites, and two negroes died; none before June, nor after the middle of August, in which months, including July, the disease raged with exceeding mortality. I do not strictly remember the very Days either of their inoculation or decease, nor is it very material. They were as follow, viz. The Rev. Mr. Basset, Mr. Sterland, John Harris, Miss Roche, Miss Perroneau, a girl at Mr. Beal's, besides a negro wench of Mrs. Blakeney's, and another of Mrs. Hext's. And tho' I shall not make the least subtraction from the debtors side of inoculation, for any suspicions the friends of physicians of the deceased might entertain of their previous natural infection; yet would it scarcely be consistent with the impartiality I have professed, to omit a summary account of the cases and constitutions of as many of them as have fallen in any measure under my notice; which may also introduce a few passing reflections, not inapposite to the present subject.[5]

He goes on to give a summary of the fatal cases, of which one may be cited as an example of the author's style and discussion:

Miss Roche was about ten months old, a very hale plump child, and a hoarse pipe for an infant. I was consulted about her inoculation, and advised deferring it till the fall, if they thought she could be preserved from infection in the mean time. The parents doubting this, and, being urged by my colleague, Thomas Dale, M.D., to inoculate her at all events, it was performed the 28th of June. She sickened the 6th of July following, in a violent manner, took a little puke, which operated four times, and a glyster, which produced one free stool, after 48 hours costiveness. She was very tense and hot all night; it was impossible to open a vein: She took a drachm and half of Diacodium, and had it repeated in better than an hour, which abated her fever and tension a little; but next morning every thing was exasperated, and she expired suddenly in convulsions. This physician who translated Lommius,[6] and some of the celebrated Dr. Friend's works, abused my practice on this occasion very ungenerously in my absence, and objected particularly to the want of blister upon this acute invasion and high orgasm. This obliged me to a public justification of my conduct, and in the end produced a dissertation, wherein I think is undeniably proved the real impropriety of Cantharides in the first fever of the Smallpox. For if they are ever necessary in the first stage, which may possibly happen, it is always, where a fever is absent, or defective; in which cases the patient is generally rather cold, relaxed and comatose.

Killpatrick advertised in the *Gazette* the publication of a description of "The Case of Miss Mary Roche, who was inoculated June 28, 1738, fairly related and etc. with some occasional remarks on the smallpox and a few seasonable observations on the Practice of Inoculation, by James Killpatrick," and was promptly called to account by Dr. Thomas Dale,[6] a prominent physician, and neighbor (both lived on Church street). October 12, 1738, the *South Carolina Gazette* contained an announcement of the impending publication of "The Case of Miss Mary Roche, more fairly related and etc. by Thomas Dale, M.D.," and a note that its appearance had been delayed because the author and his son had both had smallpox. Shortly thereafter (January 25, 1739) an advertisement stated that there was

> . . . now in the press and will shortly be published, a full and clear reply to Doctor Thomas Dale, wherein the real impropriety of blistering in the first fever of the Smallpox is very plainly demonstrated, with some diverting remarks on the Doctor's wonderful consistence and exquisite attainments in Physic and Philology by James Killpatrick—at the same time will be published by way of answer,
>
> The Puff
> or
> a proper reply
> to Skimmington's last crudities
> Mad with revenge, he gathered all
> his wind,
> And bounc'd like Fifty Bladders
> from behind.
> by Thomas Dale, M.D.

What personal conclusion the antagonists reached is not recorded.

The *Gazette* published on October 5 a statement that smallpox was almost gone through the town, and summarized the epidemic as follows:

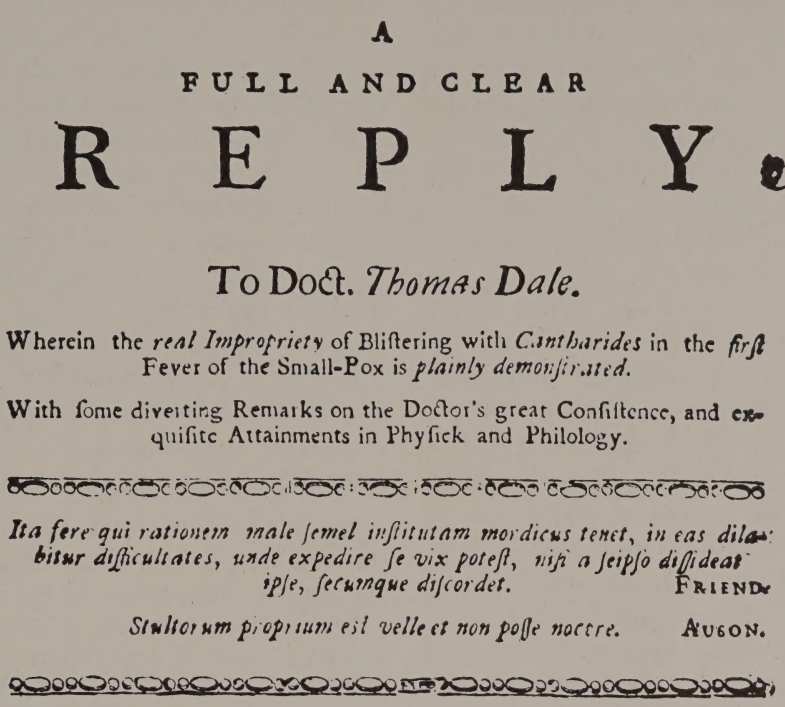
	Natural cases	
White	647	
Colored	1028	
	1675	
	Inoculated cases	
White	186	
Colored	251	
	437	
Deaths		
157		
138		
295		(17.6 per cent)
Deaths		
9		
7		
16		(3.6 per cent)

The striking contrast of 17.6 per cent mortality among the "natural cases" and 3.6 per cent among the inoculated is evident.

Inoculation apparently remained unpopular among the laity, for on September 21 the assembly passed an act prohibiting the practice in and about Charlestown, thus putting an end to its use for some time to come.[7] Perhaps this was the reason why James Killpatrick was constrained to leave the province and begin a career in London which was to make him both fashionable and famous as an inoculator.

It would appear that shortly after its introduction into England the practice of inoculation fell into disrepute, for in 1723, two years after its first application there, only 292 persons in all England were bold enough to try it, and the next year the number dropped to 40 and dwindled thereafter to total disuse by the year 1730. Coming to London full of confidence in his own methods, Killpatrick was responsible for a rapid and extensive revival of the practice and established for himself an enviable position. The essence of the superiority of his method was the selection of a favorable state of health in

the patient and the use of a virus which had been attenuated by passage from person to person—i.e. by using the pus



A

FULL AND CLEAR

REPLY,

To Doct. *Thomas Dale.*

Wherein the *real Impropriety* of Bliſtering with *Cantharides* in the *firſt* Fever of the Small-Pox is *plainly demonſtrated.*

With ſome diverting Remarks on the Doctor's great Conſiſtence, and exquiſite Attainments in Phyſick and Philology.

Ita fere qui rationem male ſemel inſtitutam mordicus tenet, in eas dilabitur difficultates, unde expedire ſe vix poteſt, niſi a ſeipſo diſſideat ipſe, ſecumque diſcordet. FRIEND.

Stultorum proprium eſt velle et non poſſe nocere. AUGON.

By Ja: Killpatrick.

CHARLES-TOWN, *Printed by* PETER TIMOTHY, 1759.

FIG. 2.

from an inoculated person rather than that from a natural case of smallpox for subsequent inoculation. He wrote "Mr. Mowbray, who inoculated more than any other practitioner, assured me he had infused matter in the fifth or sixth succession from the natural pock, and observed no difference. . . . The smallest violation of the surface, if it was stained with blood was a sufficient entrance for the matter, and the least matter was sufficient."

Killpatrick had published in Charles-town an essay on smallpox, and this treatise, revised and republished in London, soon became a standard work of reference. These were by no means his only literary productions. Later his "Analysis of Inoculation" became very popular, went through several editions, and was translated into German, French, and Dutch. His propensity for medical pamphleteering was again indulged in a "Reply to Pierce Dod." His admiration for Pope is indicated by the appearance of several poems (in Latin) addressed to the poet. A more ambitious flight was a "narrative philosophical and descriptive poem" entitled

"The Sea-Piece." Tissot was apparently his medical star for he translated three or more works of this author.

Killpatrick was an amiable and rather garrulous writer, given to recalling cases and trimming Tissot's text with his own opinions by footnote. In one of these notes the Seneka rattlesnake root comes in for unstinted praise as a valuable medicine in pleurisy and other diseases.

Killpatrick's "Full and Clear Reply to Doctor T. Dale" is an example of the controversial medical pamphlet which was common enough at the period. It is a well-written article full of literary references, larded with quotations from the works of physicians of current and earlier fame, and heavily documented. It includes considerable personal references, and is alternately amusing and dull. It makes mention of Dr. Dale's interest in the theater. As far as can be determined, the copy in the British Museum represents the earliest extant medical publication from South Carolina.

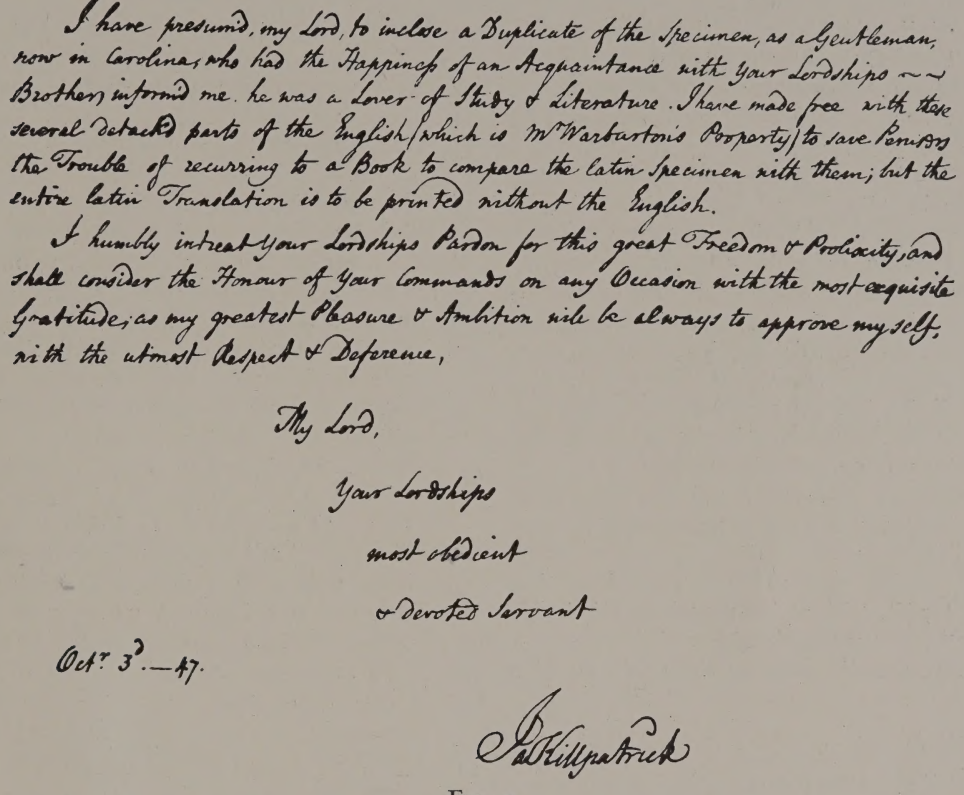
Killpatrick's personal history is rather scanty. A James Killpatrick, probably the same man, matriculated in the regular Philosophical Course at Edinburgh in 1708-09. When he came to Carolina is uncertain, but in one of the footnotes in his translation of Tissot he speaks of a voyage which was probably his emigration: "I knew a man by the Name of Poole, who being taken in the same ship with me, 1717 or 18 by Pirates, had swallowed four Guineas and a gold ring all of which he voided some Days after without any Injury or Complaint, and saved them. I forget the exact number of days he retained them, but the Pirates staid with us from Saturday night to Thursday noon." After such an experience his condition must have been somewhat impecunious when he reached his destination. First mention of his name in Charlestown is found in 1724, when he, or his name at least, is mentioned as the administrator of the estate of David Kilpatrick. In 1727 he married Elizabeth Hepworth, daughter of the Secretary of the province. He became the father of three children, William, Anne, and Thomas, and Thomas' death in the early part of the smallpox epidemic of 1738 probably spurred Killpatrick to a search for a remedy and a preventive for the disease which was so fatal and farspread in the town. He inoculated his family and describes one experience thus:

> My eldest Son, inoculated at about eleven Years of Age, had a strong Convulsion in the *Apparatus*. As he was costive a Clyster was injected, which produced one free Stool. A smart Fever arose a little after the Fit, and exerted a large Crop of the distinct Small Pox. In the manifestly inflammatory *Apparatus* of this Disease Blisters, and hot Cordials, appear, to me, as strongly contra-indicated as any Thing in the *Materia medica* can be. It seems as absurd as it would be to set a Liquor, which was ready to burst its Vessel, or waste itself in a dissipating Fermentation, by or over the Fire to restrain it. It is not denied however, that as such Convulsions generally precede the distinct Pock in Children, the Blister and Cordial are necessary if the eruptive Fever should not soon follow; and if it did, they would be less pernicious than in a high sanguineous Infection and Orgasm, where they have too often been very erroneously applied.[5]

Killpatrick's name is found in the *South Carolina Gazette* of an earlier date, when he was paid by St. Philip's vestry for services in the church hospital in 1733, when he advertised the sale of drugs in 1734, and when he offered

his house for sale in 1736. In 1733 along with Wm. Trewin, he received a royal grant of 230 acres in Granville

ascribed to Killpatrick is imposing, and places him quite on a level with his antagonist, Dr. Dale. The abbreviated



I have presumd, my Lord, to inclose a Duplicate of the Specimen, as a Gentleman, now in Carolina, who had the Happiness of an Acquaintance with your Lordships ~~ Brother informd me he was a Lover of Study & Literature. I have made free with those several detached parts of the English, which is M^r Warburton's Property, to save Him the Trouble of recurring to a Book to compare the Latin Specimen with them; but the entire latin Translation is to be printed without the English.

I humbly intreat your Lordships Pardon for this great Freedom & Prolixity, and shall consider the Honour of your Commands on any Occasion with the most exquisite Gratitude; as my greatest Pleasure & Ambition will be always to approve my self, with the utmost Respect & Deference,

My Lord,

Your Lordships

most obedient

& devoted Servant

Oct^r 3^d.—47.

J. Killpatrick

FIG. 3.

County. His portion was later sold to his partner.[8] In October, 1741, Jas. Killpatrick, "practitioner in physic," sold to Peter Laurens part of a lot on the northeast corner of Elliott and Church Streets.[9] By July, 1742, after the smallpox had left the town, his accounts were in the hands of an attorney, and he was off for England to change his name to Kirkpatrick and to become famous. It is said that when he reached London he "proceeded to the degree of M.D.,"[10] a statement which is apparently borne out by the fact that the title does not appear after his name in his pamphlet published in Charlestown and does show in his London publication.

The list of writings which may be

list of his works appears below.

Killpatrick deserves more of a place in our local medical annals than has been accorded him, especially, perhaps, since the exhibition of his particular medical talent was curbed by the misguided obstruction of our own legislators, a phenomenon not yet extinct, and because the observations and experiments made in Charlestown were the basis for the subsequent work which brought him international recognition and esteem over a long period of his life to the end in 1770 at the age of some seventy-four years.

LIST OF KILLPATRICK'S WORKS

1. An Essay on Inoculation. Published in Charlestown.

2. The case of Miss Mary Roche.
3. An Epistle (in verse) to Alex. Pope Esq. from South Carolina, 1737 (London).
4. Another poem to Pope, according to Killpatrick's statement.
5. A Full and Clear Reply to Doctor T. Dale: Charlestown, 1739.
6. The same, London edition of 1739.
7. An Essay on Inoculation occasioned by the Smallpox being brought into South Carolina in 1738. London, 1743.
8. Elegia Popi in memoriam infelis nymphae in Latinum versum reddita. London, 1744.
9. Celeberrimi Popii tentamen de modis criticis. Scripta digudicanda. Latine tentatum. J. Killpatrick. London, 1745.
10. A Popii excerpta quaedam—Latine reddidit. Jas. Kirkpatrick, M.D. London, 1749. (Mentioned in the preface to the "Analysis of Inoculation.")
11. "A letter to the real and genuine Pierce Dod by Dod Pierce. London, 1746. This was a medical pamphlet which speedily went into a second edition (1746). Killpatrick mentions this in his "Analysis of Inoculation."
12. The Sea-Piece—A poetical account of a voyage from Europe to America. Canto II, 1749, London.
13. The Sea-Piece—a narrative philosophical and descriptive poem. In five Cantos. By J. Kirkpatrick.
14. Some reflections on the causes and circumstances that may retard or prevent the putrefaction of dead bodies. London, 1751.
15. The Analysis of Inoculation. London, 1754.
16. The same, Ed. 2, London, 1761.
17. The same, Ed. 3, London, 1761.
18. The same (in German), Leipzig, 1756.
19. The same (in French), Paris, 1757.
20. The same (in Dutch), Rotterdam, 1755.
21. Translation of Tissot's "Advice to People in General." London, 1765. This went through five subsequent editions (1766, 1767, 1768, 1771, 1793).
22. (Tissot, S. A.) An essay on diseases incident to literary persons. With a preface and notes by J. K. London, 1769.
23. (Tissot, S. A.) An essay on the disorders of people of fashion; and a treatise on the diseases incident to literary persons. With a preface and notes by J. K. London, 1772.

References

1. *South Carolina Gazette,* May 4, 1738. File of Charleston Library Society.
2. Ramsay, D. History of South Carolina. Charleston, 1809, p. 77.
3. *South Carolina Gazette,* April 15, 1731. The method consisted of making one incision in the muscular part of one arm, and another in the opposite leg, placing therein the variolous matter on a dossil of lint, leaving it for a day or two, then removing the lint and applying a Colewort leaf.
4. *South Carolina Gazette,* Aug. 3, 1738.
5. Kirkpatrick, J. Analysis of Inoculation. London, 1754.
6. Seibels, R. L. Thomas Dale. *Ann. Med. Hist.,* new series, 3:50-57, 1931.
7. An Act for the better preventing the spreading of the infection of the Small Pox in Charlestown.
8. Records of Registrar of Mesne Conveyance. Charleston County. Book T, p. 508.
9. *Ibid.,* Book W, p. 86.
10. Creighton, C. A History of the Epidemics in Britain. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1894, 2:489.